Bác Ba Phi

Bác Ba Phi is a folklore character who was later novelised by writer Anh Động. He is the main character in stories about everyday life, but these stories are wildly exaggerated (such as a snake slapping a fish, throwing a rock to bring down an airplane, or falling from a chilli tree and breaking a leg). The way the stories are told is so natural that listeners are taken by surprise and burst into laughter. He is the most modern character in the tradition of humourous and exaggerated storytelling in Vietnamese literature.

The Real-Life Prototype

The real-life inspiration for Bác Ba Phi was Nguyễn Long Phi (1884–1964), a skilled storyteller from Đầm Dơi District, Cà Mau Province. He was a farmer known for his rich and captivating storytelling, which was widely beloved.

Born in 1884 in Đồng Tháp Province, he was the eldest of five siblings, meaning his real title should have been "Hai Phi"[1]. Due to political turmoil, his family had to flee their homeland and eventually settled near the coastal region of Cà Mau when Hai Phi was just ten years old. Because his family was impoverished, he had to work as a hired ploughman from a young age to support his eight younger siblings. His mother passed away when he was 15, making him the primary provider for the family. Despite these hardships, he remained cheerful and loved music and storytelling. At night, after a hard day's work of reclaiming land and farming, he would join gatherings where he played music and shared stories. His neighbours admired both his singing and his bold, straightforward personality, as well as his engaging storytelling style.

At the age of 18, Hai Phi was conscripted by the French and sent abroad as a colonial soldier. After several years, he escaped to Thailand and later made his way back to the U Minh Forest, where he lived until his passing.

As a tenant farmer for Hương Quản Tế, a wealthy landowner in Bảy Ghe, he was promised the landowner's daughter, Ba Lữ, in marriage—on the condition that he worked for three years. Thanks to his diligence and perseverance, he fulfilled the requirement and married her. Hương Quản Tế held his son-in-law in high regard and gave the couple a significant amount of land. With his hard work, Hai Phi turned this land into vast, fertile fields. Since his wife was the third child in her family, people began calling him "Ba Phi" (Phi the Third), a name that stuck for the rest of his life.

After some time, when Ba Phi and Ba Lữ had no children, Ba Lữ arranged for him to take a second wife. This second wife bore him a son, Nguyễn Tứ Hải. For unknown reasons, when Nguyễn Tứ Hải was just three years old, his mother left him with Ba Phi and returned to her hometown in Mỹ Tho, where she remained until her death. Nguyễn Tứ Hải later married Nguyễn Thị Anh and had a son—Bác Ba Phi's eldest grandson—named Nguyễn Quốc Trị. In Bác Ba Phi's stories, this grandson was the well-known character "Thằng Đậu", and from these tales came the saying "Tệ như vợ (thằng) Đậu" (*"As clumsy as Đậu's wife"*), used to describe inept people.

1: "Hai" refers to the second child, after the eldest son in Vietnamese naming conventions.

Later in life, Bác Ba Phi married a third wife, Chăm, a Khmer woman, with whom he had two daughters.

He passed away in the U Minh Hạ Forest, in what is now Lung Tràm Hamlet, Khánh Hải Commune, Trần Văn Thời District, Cà Mau Province. His grave is located between those of Ba Lữ and Chăm.

Literary Characteristics

Bác Ba Phi belonged to the later generations of pioneers who settled the U Minh Forest. His life, particularly his youth, was dedicated to reclaiming and cultivating this wild and untamed land—generous yet unforgiving. With a pioneering spirit and an optimistic outlook, his worldview was both vibrant and endearing.

Every one of his stories brings laughter, characterised by a smooth and uniquely Ba Phi-style humour. At the same time, they reflect the bravery of pioneers, the distinct personality of Southern Vietnamese people, and a deep love for both nature and humanity.

Until his death, none of his stories were officially recorded, not even by his own relatives. His tales were passed down orally. However, they still possessed a well-defined literary structure: an introduction, a buildup, and a conclusion. In a way, they resembled a condensed form of episodic novels, maintaining coherence despite any changes in narrative order.

Due to their oral nature, Bác Ba Phi's stories have often been "edited" or "modified" over time as they spread. Additionally, many tales attributed to him were actually created by others, borrowing his name to add credibility.

Some Stories of Bác Ba Phi Translated into English

Bác Ba Phi Becomes a Fortune Teller

For the past few days, Hai Lúa kept hearing her son Út talk nonstop about a mysterious fortune teller who had shown up out of nowhere. The man could read faces and hands with uncanny accuracy. Ever since he arrived, the neighbourhood had been packed with people seeking his advice.

"Dad, you know what?" Út chattered excitedly. "Even the fierce councilman was afraid of him! For the past week, he's been treating him to fine meals, tea, and liquor, paying him hundreds of *đồng* just to hear about his fortune. The fortune teller told him that because he had many concubines and illegitimate children, his family was in disarray. If he didn't do good deeds—like sharing his wealth with the poor and reducing land taxes—his life would become miserable, and he might even end up in prison!"

"Hah! Even I could say something like that," Hai Lúa scoffed, waving his hand dismissively.

Út protested, “You just don’t believe it! There are many other strange things too. Like Uncle Tư—when the fortune teller read his palm, he said: ‘You have wealth waiting for you, but you must avoid the colours red and black. If you resolve this issue, go to Rạch Ráng, apologise to your in-laws, and bring your wife home to stabilise your family. Borrow a few dozen acres of land and start farming immediately. By New Year, you’ll have at least 500 bushels of rice, your household will be peaceful, and money will flow in. As for avoiding the colour black—just quit cockfighting, gambling, and betting, and you’ll be fine!’”

Hearing this, Hai Lúa decided to go see the fortune teller. But the moment the fortune teller saw Hai Lúa, his face turned pale. Meanwhile, Hai Lúa noticed the man’s fake beard, tinted glasses, and a face that seemed oddly familiar. Without saying a word, Hai Lúa walked away. That same night, the fortune teller packed up and disappeared.

Years later, after a few drinks loosened his tongue, Hai Lúa casually asked, “Why did you run away back then?”

“How could I not? You were about to expose me!” Ba Phi laughed heartily. “I never really wanted to be a fortune teller. But seeing how people in our village were so obsessed with fortune-telling, I decided to do it to steer them away from bad habits. Think about it—did I ever take a single penny from them? When you showed up, I was annoyed because you interrupted my act. But later, I realised it was for the best. If I had kept going and started making things up, the consequences might have been worse than what I intended.”

The Walking Plum Tree

After the harvest, I had nothing to do but lie around in the kitchen loft, propping up my legs. Resting too much got boring, so I started moulding some dirt into marbles to play with my slingshot. I wandered to the back of the field, where normally, around noon, flocks of birds would perch on the trees, creating a thick, dark canopy. But today, the place was strangely silent.

Feeling bored, I randomly shot at three small birds until I ran out of ammo. Feeling thirsty, I walked over to a plum tree near the embankment to pluck some fruit. The tree was heavy with plums, its branches drooping like a cluster of nipa palm nuts. The plums were smooth and shiny, but I knew they had large seeds inside.

I climbed the tree, lying back comfortably on a sturdy fork, picking and nibbling on the fruit. The shade was like a giant umbrella, and a gentle breeze made me feel completely at ease. With some wagtails chirping along, I got carried away and started singing a southern folk tune. As I hit the final dramatic notes, snapping my fingers in rhythm, I suddenly heard a rustling sound.

Opening my eyes, I saw a large spotted deer standing nearby, seemingly enjoying my song. Afraid it might run away, I quickly grabbed a plum, removed the seed, loaded it into my slingshot, and fired at its face. The seed hit the deer’s eye, and it let out a loud “*bét bét*” cry before dashing into the forest.

I forgot all about that deer until three years later. One afternoon, while harvesting rice near the forest’s edge, the scorching sun forced me to take a break. I leaned against the nearest shady tree. When I finally looked closely, I realised—it was a plum tree! And it was full of fruit!

Feeling lucky, I reached out to pick a plum and take a bite. It was sweet but had a slightly fishy taste. I grabbed another, but suddenly, the tree moved away from me and let out a "*bét*" sound.

Startled, I jumped to my feet. My god! The plum tree suddenly took off, running full speed toward the forest!

Amazed, I chased after it. But the more I ran, the faster it fled, leaving a trail of "*bét bét*" sounds behind.

A Fierce Battle with Giant Snakeheads

One day, my grandson Đậu and I went into the forest to check on our crops. Somehow, we lost focus and fell straight into a canal.

"Oh wow, Grandpa! This water is nice and cool!" Đậu giggled.

"Yeah," I replied, nodding. "Drinking half a stomach full of it is extra refreshing."

Suddenly—*snap!*

"Ouch! Grandpa! What was that?!"

Then—*snap! snap!*

It turned out that a horde of massive snakehead fish lived in the canal. They were starving, having gone without food for days. The moment we fell in, they thought we were a feast and began leaping up, biting wildly.

Đậu, feeling a chill run down his spine, gripped his spear tightly and fought back, swinging left and right to fend off the ferocious fish while trying to protect both himself and me. He looked just like Zhao Zilong breaking through the siege at Xiangyang to rescue the young prince.

After finally escaping the swarm of snakeheads, we were utterly exhausted, sitting on the embankment catching our breath. We checked our injuries—luckily, all the blood was from the fish. The only real loss was our clothing. Our shirts had been completely shredded, leaving us with just our waistbands and belts. We had no choice but to wrap ourselves in leaves to make the long walk back home.

Monkeys Mowing the Fields

When we first settled this land, monkeys were everywhere. Each troop had hundreds of them, some as big as four- or five-year-old children. They were a menace, eating anything we planted. One year, I grew a huge sweet potato field. But by the time harvest came, the monkeys had dug up and devoured every last one.

Frustrated, I racked my brain for a way to teach them a lesson. The problem was, monkeys are clever. You can't fool them easily.

Then, I had an idea.

Every time I went to the field, they would gather in the trees to watch me. So one day, I pretended to drink water from my boat, but I had secretly mixed it with honey. Then I washed my face with it. When I left, I pretended to forget my boat. The monkeys, thinking it was safe, climbed down, drank the sweet water, and splashed around.

The leader of the troop was a massive silverback, standing chest-high to a man. He was cautious at first, but after seeing the others enjoying themselves, he joined in too. That's when my trap worked—I had set a snare in the boat that only triggered for animals over 50 kilos. The small monkeys passed through easily, but when the silverback jumped in, the trap sprang shut.

I took him home and put him to work clearing the fields. He was surprisingly good at it, chopping away weeds just as efficiently as any man.

"What happened to the other monkeys, Uncle Ba?" someone asked.

"Well, after seeing their boss captured and forced to do farm work, they got so scared they never dared come back," I chuckled. "Besides, they weren't thieves back then like they are now."

The younger folks looked puzzled.

"See, it's because I tricked them into bathing in honey. Over time, ants stuck to their fur, and they had to keep scratching and grabbing at things. That habit stuck, and now they're thieves for life!"

The Tiger That Milled Rice

That night, while I was milling rice, I suddenly sensed a tiger nearby. I immediately knew that "the master" was lurking outside. Since I was prepared, I kept milling while staying on high alert.

Sure enough, in the blink of an eye, the tiger lunged at me. I swiftly dodged to the side. The tiger, caught off balance, got its front paws tangled in the milling frame. As a result, it got swept up by the rotating millstone.

Seeing this, I urged my wife to scoop rice into the mill. The tiger ended up milling 20 bushels of rice before I let out a loud shout:

"Tiger!"

Terrified, the tiger bolted straight into the jungle.

From that day on, it "kicked the habit" of hunting people for food.

Breaking Traffic Laws

Back when the land was newly cultivated, this region was great for growing watermelons. The fruits were massive—some over three hand spans in circumference! I'd bet no one could walk into a

watermelon field, carry three melons, and jump across an irrigation ditch—if they could, I'd be their servant for life! Every year during planting season, it was such a joy. The monsoon breeze blew gently, the vines sprawled out, the leaves fanned wide, and the tendrils sent out bright white shoots. Every morning in the fields, you could see the melons growing as if they were inflating before your eyes.

From Rạch Lùm to Trùm Thuật, from Bãi Ghe to Kinh Ngang, Đường Ranh, and Lung Tràm—an endless sea of watermelons! Every morning, young men and women, some wearing felt hats, others in crisp white *áo bà ba* shirts, carried watering cans in single file along the irrigation ditches. The metal cans gleamed under the sun, and the monsoon winds rustled through, cooling the heart.

As Tet approached and the melons ripened, traders from upstream arrived in droves to haggle and strike deals. Farmers flocked to the markets, eager to buy silk trousers and fine shirts. Melons were transported to Cà Mau and Bạc Liêu, but only by boat—never by truck. Back then, the roads were so rough that transporting melons by truck would have crushed them. The American police had long banned it. And honestly, those roads were rugged.

Despite the strict ban, one day, the Hiệp Thành bus broke the rule. As it travelled from Cà Mau to Cầu Sập, an American officer suddenly blew his whistle and waved it down:

"Why are you transporting watermelons on the roof?"

The officer demanded. The bus driver replied:

"What? No, sir!"

Seeing the officer's suspicious glare, the driver glanced back. Suddenly, he turned pale and stammered:

"Sir! Those aren't watermelons—those are passengers' heads! The road is so bumpy that their heads have punched through the roof and gotten stuck up there!"

The Walking Mound

It was land-clearing season, but the fields were completely flooded. What a bizarre year! The ivory-coloured waters of the Sông Đốc River swelled up, while the black waters of U Minh swirled down. The southern winds howled, and waves surged over the fields like a stormy sea. Rats, snakes, and insects, left with nowhere to go, clung to treetops in clusters. The deep reddish waters of U Minh, dark as brewed tea, drowned everything in their path. This was the best time to clear land.

That day, as usual, I carried my sharpening stone and machete out to the field. As soon as I heard the coucal bird call before dawn, I was already in the fields. The water was so vast and deep it reached my chest, sending chills through my body. There wasn't a single patch of dry land to rest my sharpening stone. I waded around until dawn, and finally, by luck, I found a firm, raised mound about two hand spans above the water. Carefully, I settled in, placed my stone on it, and started sharpening my machete.

After I finished, I rolled a cigarette from my stash and lit it. As daylight grew stronger, I looked up and was startled:

"Huh? Where did this dense garden come from? How strange! And... why am I right outside my own house?"

To my right was the buffalo shed. To my left, the pigsty. In the middle was the kitchen, where my wife was crouching over the fire. It felt like a dream—I couldn't make sense of it. Finally, I called out to my wife. She ran out, looked up, and screamed:

"Help! Someone save my husband!"

I laughed.

"Are you crazy?"

Her face was pale as she frantically waved at me:

"Get down! Come here—hurry!"

Still chuckling, I casually wrapped my headscarf, picked up my sharpening stone, shouldered my machete, and stepped down from the mound. My wife grabbed my shoulders and spun me around:

"Look back!"

I turned and looked.

Good heavens!

A massive golden turtle! I had been sitting on its back the whole night, sharpening my machete—without even realising it!

Hugging a Snake

That dry season, I went deep into the U Minh forest to harvest honey. Around noon, I leaned against a cajeput tree for shade and pulled out my tobacco pouch for a smoke. Nearby, about a hundred meters away, stood a dead tree—maybe a cotton tree or something similar. It was stripped bare, with all its branches and leaves fallen, leaving only its tall, cracked trunk. Its bark was black and slightly mouldy, with a Y-shaped fork at the top.

A strange thing happened—every time a bird landed on that fork, it vanished without a trace.

I didn't pay much attention. I slung my basket over my shoulder, grabbed my machete, and went on collecting honey. By afternoon, my basket was full, and I was ready to head back. Suddenly, I heard a roaring wildfire sweeping in from upwind.

When a fire breaks out in the U Minh forest during the dry season, the flames shoot sky-high and roar like a hurricane. There's no outrunning it. The only options are to dig a hole and hide or climb a tall tree and wait for the fire to pass. I had no time to dig, so I had to climb. I dropped my honey basket and machete and found a tree to scale.

I grabbed onto it and climbed—but the bark was oddly smooth. No matter how hard I tried, for every three moves up, I slid two back down. But with the fire closing in, I had no choice. I kept climbing.

I reached the Y-shaped fork just as the flames roared beneath me. I felt relieved—until I noticed something strange. The fork had rough, jagged "splinters" that pricked my hands. Exhausted but relieved, I sat there as the fire passed below.

Once the danger was over, I prepared to climb down. But then, the "tree" started shifting. The Y-shaped fork suddenly sprouted "branches" that reached out, scratching at my head. I slid down a bit—only for the "tree" to coil and rub against my body with a slimy, saliva-like film.

Then I saw them—two enormous, glossy eyes gleaming like headlights!

The Y-shaped fork snapped shut—right where my head had been!

My blood ran cold. My limbs gave out. I let go and tumbled to the ground. My ears rang, my vision blurred, and I braced myself for death.

When I hit the ground, I realised I had landed right back where I had been smoking earlier. The "tree" slithered away, flicking its tongue, hissing in frustration.

It wasn't a tree at all.

It was a gigantic snake.

The Magic Vine

Ever since Đậu and I brought the reticulated python home from the pond's edge and treated its wounds —caused by the antlers of a deer—it had recovered completely. It could hunt on its own, but most of the time, it just coiled up in front of the hut or hung itself over the forked branches of the large mangrove tree by the fish pond. It rarely went out anymore, and even when it did, it never strayed far. It seemed that the incident with the deer, which left it wounded all over, had been a lesson it would never forget.

The python had lost a lot of weight. Đậu simply couldn't provide enough food for it. Its daily appetite was easily over ten kilograms, and Đậu had a hundred other things to take care of.

As usual, before going to bed that night, Đậu checked on the python, which lay coiled in a massive heap right outside the door. But when the second round of rooster crows woke him up, the python was gone.

"Hmph! Must've gone out hunting again," Đậu muttered and went back to sleep.

Suddenly, voices stirred outside. Hai Lúa came wading through the garden, carrying a torch.

"This is strange! My wife got up in the middle of the night to go behind the house and never came back."

Hearing that, my grandpa, Ba Phi, jolted awake and asked Đậu, "Where's the reticulated python?"

"I don't know, Grandpa. It was in front of the house earlier, but now it's disappeared."

Ba Phi broke into a cold sweat. He rushed inside to grab an ancient rattan vine, over two hundred years old, and urged Hai Lúa, "Hold that torch up and follow me to the garden."

Not knowing what was going on, Đậu scrambled after them.

As I walked, I swept the vine through the grass, searching. Finally, I spotted the reticulated python—its mouth wide open, stretching its neck to swallow... Aunt Hai Lúa!

It had started from her feet, so half of her body was still outside. Her hands pressed against the ground in sheer terror, and she was too shocked to scream. Hai Lúa, upon seeing his wife being swallowed, managed to let out a single cry before fainting on the spot.

Panting, I reassured Aunt Hai Lúa, "Stay calm, Sister Hai! I'll get you out of this!"

I pulled out my rattan vine and jammed it into the python's mouth. Then, using all my strength, I propped the vine upward, forcing its jaws to open wider. As I pushed, I muttered like I was chanting a spell:

"Stretch... more... more..."

The vine seemed to possess a mystical power. It gradually pried the python's mouth open. Without hesitation, I grabbed Aunt Hai Lúa's flailing arms and yanked hard. Her entire body shot out of the snake's mouth.

Having lost its prey and still tangled with the vine, the furious python hissed loudly before slithering off into the forest, disappearing without a trace.

Sinking the Enemy Ship

When I heard rumours that the Americans were sending ironclad warships to capture the so-called "VC" Ba Phi, I was enraged.

"They want to take me down? Not so easy!"

After days of thinking until my head nearly exploded, I finally came up with a plan to counter them. I took Đậu straight to the local blacksmith, asking him to forge and link together ten long iron saw blades. Out of respect for me, the blacksmith worked tirelessly without questioning my request.

Once the saw blades were ready, I had Đậu help me haul them to the Ông Đốc River. We struggled to row our small boat, loaded with the heavy saws, all the way there. When we arrived, I showed Đậu how to stretch the saw blades diagonally across the river at the bend near Rạch Lùm Inlet.

“Make sure the saw teeth face toward the sea,” I reminded him.

We continued laying out the remaining saw blades, each spaced ten meters apart, submerged just a hand’s width below the water’s surface. In total, the trap spanned about a hundred meters across the river.

With the underwater setup complete, we turned our attention to the land.

Đậu and I gathered all the torn fishing nets we could find in the village and cut down a bunch of dried banana fibres. We then tied the ragged nets and banana fibres to the tops of the tallest trees on both riverbanks. In the open spaces, I planted sharpened bamboo stakes densely in the ground.

The next morning, I took Đậu to the riverbank, found a safe hiding spot, and waited.

As soon as the sun climbed about a meter above the horizon, the Americans sent in ten ironclad warships from their offshore fleet, carrying an entire battalion. Their soldiers stood ready, guns in hand, prepared to fire at anything along the riverbanks. The engines roared as they charged toward the Ông Đốc River, turning into the inlet.

I crouched, eyes locked on the scene. Suddenly, a chilling screech pierced the air. The lead warship had struck my saw blades—cleanly slicing through its lower hull, about a hand’s width below the waterline. The entire ship shook violently. Though it still had momentum, it barrelled forward like a runaway arrow.

But once the ship lost its speed, it began to slow down, and the severed hull gradually took in water. The upper deck, still carrying its own momentum, pushed forward a few dozen more meters before the entire ship started to sink. Soldiers floundered in the water like drowning rats.

Then the second ship hit. The third. The fourth... All ten shared the same fate.

Watching them panic, completely unaware of what had just happened, Đậu and I burst into laughter, nearly rolling out of our hiding spot from laughing too hard.

The King Crab

“I’m free today, nothing to do, and I can’t stand just sitting around. Let’s find something to do, Hai Lúa.”

“Hey! That’s a great idea, Uncle Ba. Let’s go right away!”

And so, the two of them grabbed their crab-catching gear and headed straight to the fields. They searched all morning but didn’t catch a single crab. Uncle Ba Phi, frustrated, plopped down on the edge of a rice paddy. Suddenly, he shouted:

“Whoa! What kind of hole is this, Hai?”

He waded down into the field to inspect the hole.

“Look at this, take a close look. Aren’t these crab tracks all over the place?”

“That’s strange! These are definitely crab tracks, no doubt about it, but... why are they so big? No crab could possibly be this large!”

Uncle Ba knelt in front of the hole and stuck his entire arm inside.

“Let’s see... Whoa! I think—Ouch! Ow!”

Uncle Ba yelped and quickly pulled his hand out of the hole, revealing a crab clinging tightly to his index finger.

Seeing the crab, Hai Lúa was delighted:

“Aha! A big crab!”

In pain, Uncle Ba Phi flung his arm with all his strength, sending the crab flying onto the ground. Hai Lúa immediately pounced to grab it. But Uncle Ba was still howling:

“Ah... ah... ah... it hurts! Get this crab off me, Hai Lúa!”

“But Uncle Ba, the crab already fell off! Only the claw is still stuck to your finger.”

“But... but the claw still hurts like hell! Ah... ah...”

Finally, they managed to remove the claw from Uncle Ba’s hand.

Hai Lúa eagerly stepped up:

“Step aside, Uncle Ba! Watch this... I’ve caught countless crabs in my life, and no crab has ever pinched me. If this one dares—Ouch! Ow! Owww!”

Uncle Ba burst out laughing:

“What’s with all the screaming?”

Hai Lúa yanked his hand out, making a ripping sound. Dangling from his fingers were five crabs. Uncle Ba shouted in shock:

“Heavens! Five crabs at once!”

Hai Lúa screamed and flailed his arms wildly. Eventually, the five crabs fell off, but... their five claws remained clamped onto his five fingers. This time, Uncle Ba had to struggle to pry the claws off.

Still determined, Hai Lúa crouched down and stuck a metal hook into the hole, probing inside.

Suddenly—*"THUMP!"* A loud noise rang out as Hai Lúa was yanked right up to the entrance of the hole. Furious, he planted one foot against the edge of the hole, bracing himself.

"You wanna challenge me, huh? Let's see who's stronger!"

But no matter how hard he pulled, he couldn't budge whatever was inside. Uncle Ba Phi had to jump in and grab onto Hai Lúa, pulling with all his might... They struggled for a long time until suddenly —*"SWOOSH!"*—both of them lost their balance and tumbled backward onto the ground.

From the hole, a massive crab, as big as a large winnowing basket, came flying out, landing on its back with its legs and claws flailing in the air.

Uncle Ba Phi was dumbfounded:

"Good thing it landed on its back! If it hadn't, we'd each be losing a limb right now. We have to find a way to take it home quickly. If it flips back over, it'll be nearly impossible to catch."

Uncle Ba Phi scanned the surroundings and finally found a long vine. The two of them struggled for a while before managing to tie up the giant crab and haul it home. It was so big that Uncle Ba had to put it in a giant clay jar and weigh the lid down with heavy stones.

In the middle of the night, strange noises suddenly came from the jar, followed by a loud crack—the jar shattered! The king crab crawled out and scurried toward the garden.

The house dog, Phèn, was dozing in the yard when it heard the commotion. It jumped up and ran to investigate. Seeing the strange creature blocking its path, the crab hesitated, assessing the situation. Phèn cautiously stepped forward, sniffing to understand its opponent, when suddenly—*SNAP!* The crab pinched Phèn's nose, sending waves of pain through its body.

Yelping in agony, Phèn thrashed wildly, barely managing to free itself before bolting back inside the house, tail between its legs, whimpering the whole way.

With the dog out of the way, the king crab confidently continued its escape. As it reached the middle of the garden, it encountered a goose foraging nearby. The goose, delighted at the sight of prey, waddled over and immediately attacked. But the crab's shell was impenetrable—while the crab remained unscathed, the goose's beak was chipped.

Before the goose could recover from its shock, the crab lunged—*"SNAP!"*—its massive claw clamped down on the goose's long neck. Trapped, the goose flapped its wings desperately, squawking at the top of its lungs.

This time, the goose's cries woke up Uncle Ba Phi and Hai Lúa. They rushed outside and were stunned by what they saw. Hai Lúa shouted:

"Look! The king crab has the goose by the neck and is dragging it across the grass! That goose is done for!"

Uncle Ba grabbed a machete and charged at the crab, striking it repeatedly. But...

“Dear heavens! Its shell is too tough! My machete didn’t even leave a scratch, and now it’s chipped and bent like a sickle!”

Before Uncle Ba could react, the crab lunged and clamped down on the machete. He struggled to yank it back but couldn’t. Hai Lúa jumped in to help, trying to pry Uncle Ba free. But then the king crab released the goose and snapped its other claw onto Hai Lúa’s hand. Shocked, Hai Lúa let go and fell backward. Meanwhile, Uncle Ba dropped the machete and grabbed a wooden club, swinging wildly at the crab.

To his surprise, the crab seemed to anticipate his move—it raised a claw and snatched the club, holding it firmly. No matter how much Uncle Ba struggled, the crab wouldn’t let go.

Just as Uncle Ba was trying to regain control, the king crab suddenly—*“SNAP!”*—chopped the club in half, sending him tumbling backward.

“HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME!”

Hearing the commotion, Uncle Tư Rô, who lived nearby, grabbed a hoe and ran over. Without hesitation, he swung the hoe down onto the crab’s shell.

“CLANG!” Sparks flew, but the crab remained unharmed. Meanwhile, Uncle Tư’s hoe shattered—its handle broke, and the metal blade bent out of shape. Uncle Tư was in shock:

“What in the world?! This is impossible!”

The crab, refusing to back down, stood defiantly, its claws raised as if challenging them.

Uncle Ba Phi smacked his forehead and said:

“I’ve got an idea! Tư, you stand in front and keep it distracted. Hai Lúa, get behind it and wait for the right moment to flip it over. Leave the rest to me.”

With that, Uncle Ba ran inside the house. Tư Rô and Hai Lúa did as instructed...

Soon, the crab was flipped onto its back, flailing its legs in the air. Just then, Uncle Ba rushed out of the house—carrying a pot of boiling water. He sprinted over and dumped the entire pot onto the king crab. Steam rose as the crab writhed for a moment before going completely still. Its shell and claws turned a deep, rich red, releasing a delicious aroma.

The next morning, a grand feast featuring a “Seven-Course King Crab Banquet” was held for the entire neighbourhood. What a feast it was!